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LEVERAGING HURRICANE KATRINA RETRIEVALS

by Frank DeMarco

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On the night of September 1, my friend Rita Warren and I set out to do soul retrievals primarily focused on New Orleans and the tristate area hit by Hurricane Katrina. Rita has been doing this work successfully since the very first *LIFELINE* program in the early 1990s, so she has had a lot of practice. My own retrievals raised some interesting points that may be useful to others.

After setting my intent to help lots of people rather than doing retrievals “retail,” I immediately found myself on a major street in New Orleans, under this unbelievably bright, glaring light that was perhaps twelve feet above street level. As it was nighttime, the bright light was a huge attractor. Whatever else happened, I know I didn’t make up the light: it was already there as I faded into the scene.

I was “dressed” as a smallish, thin, black man who was past his prime and had a scruffy white beard. I realized later that I was basically imitating Fred Sanford! I started yelling at the three or four guys around me. Here’s a rough paraphrase, from memory: “They’re not goin’ to help us. They’re not goin’ to do nothing! They don’t care if they leave us here to rot. I tell you what I’m goin’ to do. I’m goin’ to march down to the river (or maybe it was the canal). They got a big barge down there, and if enough of us go down there, they GOT to take us somewhere! They GOT to do something with us. But it’s got to be a whole lot of us go down there. One guy by himself, that’s nothing.”

Well, a few of the people—there were a lot more now, between the brilliant light and the shouting—said they’d go too. I added, “But we don’t go down there looking like a mob, or they liable to shoot us! We go down there marching four wide, like we was soldiers, and we bring our dead, and we bring the kids, and somebody needs help getting down there, we help ‘em.”

So we formed up, and by the time we were ready to go there were maybe seventy or eighty people in ranks of four. At one point I told them to hold hands four across, and then I started revving them up again.

“Where we goin’?” The crowd mumbled in reply.

“We’re goin’ to the barge!” I shouted.

“Where we goin’?”

“To the barge.”

“Where we goin’?”

“TO THE BARGE.”

“All right, there’s people hiding in all these buildings. We’re goin’ to shout loud enough to raise the dead, ‘Come on Out!’” And we did, shouting, “Come on Out! We’re goin’ to the barge!” [I thought to myself that “loud enough to raise the dead” was a nice touch.] After some indeterminate time—but not very long—we got to the barge, which of course our friends “upstairs” had provided as specified. They had uniformed “troops”—army or National Guard or something, and the Red Cross, too—flanking the entry to the barge, giving out big paper cups of water to people as they went by.

Of course, once everyone was on the barge, it was duck soup to get them to Focus 27 (the reception center for the newly deceased). They basically walked into the barge at the stern, came out another hatch on the bow, and were met by people they knew. But... they didn’t all stay in 27. Immediately some sort of “sank” a couple of layers and wound up in this or that belief-system territory somewhere in 24-25-26. At least one guy went to what looked like a black church. Later on, I got that they knew by then that they were dead, but they sort of readjusted their afterlife to what they wanted or thought it ought to be.

Now, the next thing that happened was weird and also unprecedented in my experience. I went back to that bright light intending to try and mobilize more people in the same way. If it didn’t work, nothing would be lost. But instead, somebody else—a nonphysical helper, though I don’t know how I knew that at the time—went and did the same thing: did the rabbleroxing, formed them up, told them not to leave anybody behind, etc. I was pleased, of course, but also extremely perplexed.

Well, Rita and I got back to the present, swapped stories, and she suggested that we do another run. It was back to Focus 27, this time winding up not at my special place in 27 but on a hill overlooking the ocean. The place was totally unfamiliar. Nonetheless, I expressed intent and went on down to the hurricane disaster area.

At first the location seemed like New Orleans at one of the places where the levee broke. There was a body in the water, so I dived into the deep water (maybe ten feet down) and brought the body back to a little johnboat or small barge. Helpers were acting as assistants and appeared as the National Guard or some other organized rescue force. I've never handled a dead body in a retrieval, but this young girl thought she was dead. Without any concept that you leave the body after you die, she had stayed with it.

Four more retrievals followed: two on the lawn right in front of a detached house. That seemed like an odd place even as I was hauling them back. Two more were on the upper story of a two-story detached house. I went right through the wall with them—anything to break the spell. The last four were young men in their 20s or maybe 30s. They may have been white, but I wasn't quite sure. This point is relevant for reasons that will appear shortly.

With each one, we went through the same routine. I told my "men" that the dead person "was in shock, probably thought they were going to die, and maybe thought they had died. You've got to get them sitting up and breathing and get them dry, or they're going to die."

At about this time I realized we weren't in New Orleans at all, we were somewhere on the Gulf Coast, although I'm not positive the "upstairs" crew cares much about state lines. And at that time, the helpers who were playing enlisted men to my officer and calling me lieutenant (I was white this time, by the way), started telling the men we'd rescued that we needed their help: "You men know these folks; they're your neighbors. We've got to get them out of here or they're going to die. We know you're exhausted and hungry, and we're going to get you taken care of, but we need you to help us first."

So the helpers organized the retrievees—if that's a word—to go retrieve others. And I'm thinking, "What the hell?" I'm used to being the last to get the word, but this was ridiculous. Seeing that I wasn't needed, I went back to 27 and sat on my metal lawn chair looking out at the sea, waiting for someone to explain. A helper appeared, dressed in a general's uniform. I looked at the uniform and smiled and he smiled back, because he's a general like I'm a lieutenant. He was just quietly spoofing me and wasn't one of the "other lives" I'm connected with. Either he was in charge of that particular operation or, more likely, there's some tie between us that he couldn't be bothered to explain. So I asked him, "What happened?"

He replied that they had taken advantage of my presence to get the attention of the dead people. But perhaps because of my specifying that I wanted to retrieve more than one or two people at a time, the helpers decided to leverage that attention. Once my presence had interrupted what I call "the tape-looping process," freeing the deceased from being hypnotized by their preconceptions, they recognized the helpers. Once they could relate to the helpers, a neat and unexpected thing happened: they responded to a request to assist in awakening

others. The newly dead could “hear” them because they had died in the same circumstances. Then it was a short step to making them aware of the helpers.

I was delighted to learn about this way of maximizing *LIFELINE* efforts in a major disaster and wanted to share it with you.

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